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New York

President: Mr. Ping ..... (Gabon)

The meeting was called to order at 3.05 p.m.

Agenda items 38 and 46 (*continued*)

New Partnership for Africa's Development: progress in implementation and international support

(a) New Partnership for Africa's Development: progress in implementation and international support

Report of the Secretary-General (A/59/206)

(b) Causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa

Report of the Secretary-General (A/59/285)

2001-2010: Decade to Roll Back Malaria in Developing Countries, Particularly in Africa

Note by the Secretary-General (A/59/261)

Mr. Benmellouk (Morocco) (*spoke in French*): First, we would like to thank the Secretary-General for his thorough reports on progress in the implementation of New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) (A/59/206) and the causes of conflict in Africa (A/59/285) and his note on malaria (A/59/261). We share the view of the Secretary-General that African countries have shown the political will to continue implementing NEPAD and that African partners are willing to lend support to the efforts of the African countries to reform their macroeconomic policy and improve democracy and governance.

A major effort has been made to consolidate democracy in Africa and to strengthen conflict prevention and settlement. Similar efforts have been made to invest in human resources and to meet the most elementary needs of the people in terms of health, education, access to drinking water and decent housing. However, despite these sustained efforts to create a national environment that is conducive to investment and sustainable growth, Africa continues to suffer from major handicaps that hamper its economic and social development and which could jeopardize the attainment of the Millennium Development Goals.

The report of the Secretary-General on the follow-up to the Millennium Declaration (A/59/282) gives us a clear picture of the socio-economic situation in Africa. All regions of the world are on the right track for attaining the Goals, except for Africa, where poverty has worsened. More than half of the people living in sub-Saharan Africa live on less than a dollar a day. The growth rates of the African countries remain very low in terms of halving poverty by the year 2015. The growth rate that we saw on 2003 is about 3.6 per cent, which is far from the goal of an annual growth rate of 7 per cent.

Africa suffers from an enormous backwardness in terms of basic infrastructure, hospitals, roads, ports and electrical and telephone networks. The continent suffers from the most serious kinds of infectious diseases. HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria threaten

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Africans and threaten the sustainable development of Africa. According to the Secretary-General, AIDS could destabilize African countries and thwart their ability to protect their citizens, their borders and their efforts to combat terrorism. These are examples of structural handicaps and of problems that are daily being faced by African leaders.

The greatest difficulty encountered so far by African countries lies in the lack of financial resources. Indeed, the mobilization of national resources is not in itself enough to guarantee proper financing for socio-economic development programmes, the consolidation of peace and the promotion of sustainable development.

International support remains crucial to make NEPAD a success. In the Declaration on the New Partnership for Africa's Development (resolution 57/2), adopted by the General Assembly in 2002, the developed countries pledged to lend the necessary support for the implementation of NEPAD and to live up to their international commitments, particularly those entered into in the Monterrey Consensus. More specifically, measures have to be taken to attain the goals and levels set for official development assistance (ODA) as a percentage of gross national product in order to resolve the problem of external debt, to open markets to exports from African countries, to promote and facilitate investment in those countries and to support them in attaining the Millennium Development Goals.

In that regard, the report of the Secretary-General notes a slight increase in the level of ODA to Africa: it has increased from $16 billion in 2000 to approximately $23 billion in 2003. We welcome that positive trend and encourage donors to continue their efforts to reach the international goals set.

We would like to take this opportunity to reiterate our support for the efforts made by various development partners to explore new avenues to mobilize additional financial resources. We also welcome the initiative of Brazil, France, Chile and Spain with respect to poverty eradication and the elimination of hunger, and the proposal of the technical working group on new modes of financing. Those proposals should be seriously studied by the Assembly.

The persistence of poverty could call into question all the efforts made by African countries that have truly committed themselves to implementing NEPAD's values and principles by redoubling their efforts to promote democracy, good governance and human rights and reforming their macroeconomic policies. At the present time, poverty remains one of the major threats to the stability and security of many regions, indeed, the entire world. We need to join forces and lend Africa the necessary support and solidarity to enable it to root out the poverty and despair of its people, as well as to combat the underlying causes of conflicts, which, unfortunately, continue to sow division among the peoples of Africa.

Mr. Olhaye (Djibouti), Vice-President, took the Chair.

Indeed, despite efforts made by the African countries and by the international community, the continent remains divided by conflicts and political crises. Most military conflicts in the world are taking place in Africa, and almost all of the subregions of that continent are affected by conflict or at risk of being affected.

My delegation welcomes the statement made by the Secretary-General in his report on the causes of conflict in Africa that there has been considerably progress in resolving conflicts in Africa since 1998. Only six African countries can be considered to be in a situation of armed conflict and very few others are facing deep political crises. The progress that has been made in restoring peace to certain areas of Africa attests to the effectiveness of the approach taken by Organization. The appointment by the Secretary-General of special mediators and the establishment of special commissions to examine the sources of disputes are measures that have produced results and should therefore be supported.

Clearly, however, peace-building efforts cannot be fully effective without the cooperation of the parties concerned, that is, unless the territorial integrity of each country is respected and there is substantial international assistance provided at every stage — from cessation of hostilities, through national reconciliation, including peace-building and the return of refugees and displaced persons — all carried out in conformity with international law. We believe that the development of regional and subregional cooperation is key to preventing the escalation of conflicts and ethnic rivalry, as well as the most effective way to overcome situations of conflict — potential or existing — in a

continent which has inherited artificial borders from the colonial era.

The Kingdom of Morocco, in solidarity with our African brothers, will spare no effort to advance the cause of peace in Africa, as our participation in various United Nations peacekeeping operations and our political mediation initiatives to build peace in Africa bear witness. Morocco is also committed to building regional and subregional cooperation, as well as economic integration, which will further strengthen the trust among neighbouring countries and allow for the establishment of a solid basis for sustainable peace and development. Morocco's initiative to guarantee free access for the exports of African countries and the financial investment, free trade, technological and economic cooperation agreements signed with a number of countries will further strengthen economic and commercial relations among African countries and help us to move towards attainment of the NEPAD goals.

Mr. Smaili (Algeria) (*spoke in French*): The joint consideration of the three items on the progress in implementation and international support for NEPAD, the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development in Africa and the United Nations Decade to Roll Back Malaria in Developing Countries, Particularly in Africa, seems a wise choice. This is particularly so, as the interdependence of those topics calls for an integrated approach to better understand the constraints and the particular needs of Africa in its efforts for development. Such an approach will make it possible to better target, orient and coordinate support from the international community for those efforts.

However, given the fact that each of the items is so specific, it is important that those items continue to be reported on separately. From the comprehensive reports before us, whose clarity and conciseness we welcome, it is clear that the inadequacy of financial resources and technical capacities and the persistence of conflicts and endemic diseases continue to pose major obstacles to the development efforts of the African countries.

My delegation associates itself with the statement made by Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China and the statement by Nigeria on behalf of the African Group. Nevertheless, we would like to make a few comments and observations of our own.

With regard to the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development, my delegation welcomes the results of the efforts made by African countries and by African regional organizations, as well as by the international community, which have led to the resolution of some of the conflicts in Africa, while other conflicts are in the process of being addressed. Those efforts, however, must be kept up unflaggingly and with continued resolve in order to build peace. Of crucial importance are financial support for the African Union and assistance in setting up its new institutions, as well as strengthened cooperation between the African Union and the United Nations.

Security Council approval of new missions in Côte d'Ivoire, the Sudan, Sierra Leone, Liberia and Burundi, and its decision to extend the mandate of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara (MINURSO), clearly reflect the abiding commitment of the United Nations to conflict settlement and peace-building in Africa. The Economic and Social Council's creation of the Ad Hoc Advisory Groups for Burundi and Guinea-Bissau, as countries emerging from conflict, and the cooperation between them and the Security Council's Ad Hoc Working Group on Conflict Prevention and Resolution in Africa are also indicative of the same United Nations commitment. All of those initiatives, which should be encouraged and supported, testify at the same time to the scope of the effort required to establish peace in Africa.

My delegation believes that the recommendations suggested by the Secretary-General to reduce the causes of conflict in Africa and to create the conditions for durable peace and development should make a definite contribution to peace and development on that continent. Africa is truly pledged to a vast reform movement — good governance, anti-corruption measures and democratic freedoms are gaining ground every day. The implementation of the Algiers Declaration, which denies recognition to Governments that have come to power through non-constitutional means, is part of the desire in Africa, to consolidate democracy and the rule of law.

In view of the close links that exist between peace efforts in Africa and the implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), the African Peer Review Mechanism, which was voluntarily established by African leaders, takes on great importance.

The increasing number of countries that have signed on to the Peer Review Mechanism shows that great progress has been made in the pursuit of good governance and towards greater openness to democracy.

Despite the persistent obstacles and multiple constraints, the notable progress made since last year in the implementation of NEPAD and the hoped for support of the international community give us grounds for some satisfaction and reassure us that the collective approach taken by Africa was correct and that it will be able to pull the continent out of its stagnation and underdevelopment.

Progress made in priority sectors such as energy, transportation, water and information and communication technologies, where 20 projects have already been endorsed, and the consolidation of the African Peer Review Mechanism, supported by 23 States, attest to the resolve of African countries, to fully shoulder their responsibility in implementing NEPAD.

Success has been achieved in promoting the participation of women in NEPAD through their presence on the Panel of Eminent Personalities of the African Peer Review Mechanism: three out of 7 are women, including the Chairperson. The commitment of African States to devote a considerable portion of their budgets to priority sectors, 15 per cent on health, 10 per cent on agriculture and 5 per cent on water and hygiene, is another strong signal of African resolve.

The Summit, planned to be held on 23 November in Algiers, to take stock of NEPAD will be an opportunity for Africa to reaffirm its commitments and to give new energy to the implementation of the partnership.

However, as has been stressed unambiguously by the report of the Secretary-General, more concerted and stronger support from the international community remains essential. Unless there is effective, consistent support from the international community, the NEPAD goals and the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) will just not be reached in most sub-Saharan countries.

The problem of financial resources and the inadequacy of human and technical capacities are serious handicaps that must be resolved in order to enable the rapid and effective implementation of NEPAD and its priorities.

Many initiatives, both bilateral and multilateral, all of them commendable, have been undertaken to support NEPAD in keeping with the commitment of the international community and of the United Nations system. But, as the Secretary-General rightly points out in his report, much effort still remains to be made if we truly want to support that African endeavour.

Such efforts are necessary, in terms of increasing official development assistance (ODA), resolving the thorny problem of the external debt, liberalizing trade and increasing direct foreign investment. Those three decisive areas, suggested by the Secretary-General, where concerted action is expected of Africa's development partners, seem relevant to us.

The establishment of a global environment that is conducive to growth and development, as well as coherent policies regarding debt, ODA and trade, are efforts that will better meet the requirements of a true partnership based upon shared responsibilities and benefits.

Given the burden of servicing the debt — which is basically the equivalent of all the financing provided as ODA — that assistance loses all of its impact and effectiveness for supporting development.

As long as shortcomings in any one given area jeopardize progress in another — owing to contradictions in the relevant policies and practices — the international community will certainly not be shouldering all of the responsibilities it has to combat poverty and underdevelopment in Africa. A greater effort must be made in the area of direct foreign investment, which, if directed towards priority areas as defined in the report, will give true impetus to growth and to the fight against poverty and unemployment, which particularly affect young people.

Malaria, particularly in Africa, is unfortunately still one of the major obstacles confronting the affected countries in their development efforts. Like HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases, rolling back malaria must be translated into concrete action on the ground, which means that effective drugs must be made available at affordable prices. The decade to roll back malaria in the developing countries, particularly in Africa, is certainly an instrument that can make an effective contribution to that problem. The many initiatives that have been undertaken, both multilateral and bilateral, seem ineffectual, since these scourges continue to gain ground.

In addition, attainment of the goals of the decade requires a stronger, more concerted commitment on the part of the international community.

From the various reports before us it is easy to understand that the development of Africa is a long-term and major endeavour. Sacrifices that the African countries have agreed to commit to and those to which they are already committed are laudable, but they depend on the active and united involvement of the international community.

Combating poverty and underdevelopment — which will determine whether Africa can overcome its crisis and become integrated into the world economy — should become the focus of any action or initiative for Africa in the framework of NEPAD. We hope that the high-level plenary meeting of the United Nations General Assembly to be held in 2005 will be a good opportunity to take more committed steps in favour of Africa.

Mr. Thomson (United Kingdom): I am pleased to have the opportunity to make a statement for the United Kingdom. In doing so, I associate my delegation with the statement already made by the presidency of the European Union.

As we all know, 2005 will be a landmark year. Less than 12 months from now, heads of State and Government will meet in this Assembly, in this hall, to review progress towards the ambitious development goals that emerged from the Millennium Summit four years ago.

Now there are more opportunities than ever to achieve those goals. China and India are growing at 9 per cent a year, lifting 20 million people out of poverty each year. South-East Asia has seen huge advances in the last two decades.

And yet, many countries in Africa are as poor or poorer than they were 40 years ago. The continent's share of world trade has halved in a generation. In some countries, HIV and AIDS has reduced life expectancy to what it was half a century ago. One in six African children will die before his or her fifth birthday. Of those lucky enough to survive, only half manage to complete primary school. So Africa faces great challenges. But there are also reasons to be optimistic.

In 1966, Botswana was one of the poorest countries in Africa. Now it is one of the richest. In Uganda, which once had one of the world's highest rates of HIV infection, bold political leadership and the efforts of health workers, community groups and churches have led to a decline in the number of new infections each year.

There have also been successes in tackling conflict. In Sierra Leone, a 10-year civil war has ended, with the United Nations playing a vital role. Last month the United Nations handed responsibility for security in the last remaining sector back to the Sierra Leone Government.

Two lessons stand out from experience of the past half century. First, there is no single blueprint for African development. Different countries have different needs. African countries should be in the lead in setting their path to development.

Secondly, donors must be aware of the burden that they place on African countries. For these countries, dealing with a myriad of donors, each with different and sometimes conflicting funding and reporting requirements, can often make getting development assistance more trouble than it is worth. Africa must therefore lead African development, and donors must follow. These two important lessons will underpin the United Kingdom's approach to Africa in 2005.

The United Kingdom has made Africa a priority for 2005. In our Group of Eight presidency, we will build on the work of past chairs to mobilize international action to support Africa. My Prime Minister, Tony Blair, has joined African leaders in a commission for Africa that will report next spring on how best to accelerate implementation of Africa's own plans. The commission is working closely with Mr. Gambari and the Secretary-General's advisory panel. Some of its members are in New York this week.

The United Kingdom has also increased its bilateral aid. We are on target to spend £1 billion — or approximately $1.8 billion — in Africa in the financial year 2005 to 2006, and £1.25 billion — or some $2.25 billion — in financial year 2007 to 2008. This is part of a rise in my Government's official development assistance to a total of £6.5 billion — or $11.7 billion — in financial year 2007 to 2008, which will be 0.47 per cent of the United Kingdom's gross national income, a real increase of 140 per cent since 1997. My Prime Minister made clear, in Addis Ababa last week, our aim to continue this rate of increase, which would

bring us to the United Nations target of 0.7 per cent of gross national product by 2013. However, we want to go even faster. If the International Finance Facility comes on stream as soon as we would like, the increases will be quicker and greater and we could reach 0.7 per cent by financial year 2008 to 2009. A significant share of that increased volume would be for Africa.

Two of the biggest threats to progress in Africa are disease and conflict. Allow me to address these in turn. First, as regards tackling infectious diseases, 90 per cent of all malaria cases occur in Africa, where it is the leading cause of death for children under five. Twenty-five million Africans have HIV and 2.2 million of them died of AIDS in 2003. Tuberculosis kills approximately 2 million people each year — a number that is rising all the time, after 40 years of decline. In the African countries hit hardest by disease, life expectancy will fall to just 30 years of age by 2010.

The United Kingdom is determined to play its part in tackling these threats. The right support for countries' own poverty reduction strategies can have tremendous impact. If everybody in Africa simply had access to health services, we would achieve 60 to 70 per cent of the child mortality goal and 70 to 80 per cent of the maternal mortality goal. We could also have a significant impact on infectious diseases. We should therefore support the whole health system, not just parts of it.

We know this works. In Uganda, the Government increased spending in the health sector, with financial support from donors. It implemented radical policies such as abolishing user fees. As a result, poor people started to use health services much more often. Outpatient attendance has grown by 90 per cent since financial year 1999 to 2000. Immunization rates have doubled. Improvements in child and maternal mortality rates will surely follow. The United Kingdom will spend £1.5 billion — or $2.7 billion — over the next three years to tackle HIV and AIDS. We want to strengthen the role of the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS) as the key body to support Governments in coordinating donor efforts. However, we must ensure that, in our urgency to help, we do not overwhelm already stretched Government health services.

Finally, if we are going to tackle conflict and its causes, the international community must support Africa's own solutions. The African Union has shown great commitment to regional peace and security and good governance, and has made real progress with the creation of the African Peer Review Mechanism and the Peace and Security Council.

The United Kingdom is supporting African solutions. With other Group of Eight members, we are helping develop the African Union's standby force. We will help train nearly 20,000 African troops in the next five years. The United Kingdom's Conflict Prevention Pool for Africa has already supported African-led peacekeeping operations in Burundi, Liberia, the Sudan and Côte d'Ivoire, as well as peacekeeping training centres. At its inception, we gave £2 million — or $3.6 million — to fund the African Union's ceasefire monitoring team in the Sudan. We have followed this up with an additional £12 million — or $21.6 million — which Tony Blair announced last week.

The United Kingdom looks forward to continuing to support African efforts to tackle the continent's problems, by Africans and for Africans, through 2005 and beyond.

Mr. Siv (United States of America): President Bush stated in Nigeria last year that working together, we can make this a decade of rising prosperity and expanding peace across Africa.

The United States supports the objectives of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which represent African leaders' commitment to building a prosperous future. It sets out concrete actions to promote peace and stability, consolidate democracy and provide sound economic management and people-oriented development. NEPAD's African Peer Review Mechanism is an especially promising innovation.

Regional organizations, such as the Intergovernmental Authority on Development, the Economic Community of West African States and the African Union are crucial to realizing the vision of NEPAD. Their efforts are paying off in Liberia, the Great Lakes region, Burundi and Côte d'Ivoire.

There has also been progress on democracy. According to Freedom House, 28 countries were considered "not free" in sub-Saharan Africa in 1972. By 2004, 11 countries had moved out of that category.

The President returned to the Chair.

Economic growth is reviving. In 2003, African economies registered 3.7 per cent growth, the highest in four years. The 2005 forecast is for more than 4 per cent growth. This represents a real advance.

With support from the international community, those seeds of action, results, and reform set positive examples that will help Africans lay a foundation for peace and prosperity. Nonetheless, conflicts still rage in many parts of the continent. Public infrastructure and Government institutions remain weak. Human resources have been depleted by the impact of diseases such as HIV/AIDS and malaria. Much work remains to be done.

The United States is committed to peace and prosperity in Africa. Thirteen of the 25 African peacekeeping battalions deployed worldwide have received United States training and equipment. We are providing nearly $28 million in logistical assistance to the African Union's monitoring mission in Sudan. Overall, in 2004, we will provide about $2 billion in assistance to sub-Saharan Africa.

Our new Millennium Challenge Account will focus additional resources on countries that govern justly, invest in their people and encourage economic freedom. In 2004, eight African countries make up half of those eligible for $1 billion in Millennium Challenge Account assistance.

The African Growth and Opportunity Act has opened United States markets to African products. Total United States trade with sub-Saharan Africa increased 37 per cent in the first half of 2004. Thousands of new jobs are being created in many African countries as the African Growth and Opportunity Act spurs investment in new enterprises.

Overcoming HIV/AIDS is a top priority. The President's $15 billion, five-year Emergency Plan for AIDS Relief is the largest international health initiative ever to target a single disease. We will provide treatment for 2 million HIV-infected people, prevent 7 million new infections and provide care to 10 million infected individuals in focus countries. In addition, the United States supports multilateral efforts to fight HIV/AIDS. We made the first contribution to the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria, and remain the largest donor, having pledged nearly $2 billion to that Fund.

We are equally concerned by the human suffering and poverty linked to poor maternal and child health. In 2003, we committed over $170 million in USAID resources alone to the treatment of these problems in sub-Saharan Africa.

While the United States provides more than half of the world's food aid, our goal is to help countries achieve food security. We believe famine is a preventable tragedy and are working to raise agricultural productivity and promote rural development in Africa. Last June, at Sea Island, Georgia, the G-8 leaders reiterated their commitment to the famine initiative of last year's Evian Summit. We seek to break the cycle of famine in the Horn of Africa and to turn African agriculture into an engine of growth.

More must be done to unlock Africa's potential by promoting a vibrant private sector. In the publication entitled "Doing Business 2005", the World Bank noted that sub-Saharan Africa in particular has lagged in implementing relatively inexpensive regulatory reforms. According to the Bank, reforms that reduce the time and cost that businesses face in starting up, qualifying for credit and enforcing contracts can have an enormous impact on a country's growth. These reforms can add as much as two percentage points to each country's annual real growth. Moreover, the report points out that better business regulation and property protection directly improve the welfare of the most vulnerable segments of society. When it is easy to start a business, jobs are created in the formal sector, where workers have contracts and the Government can collect taxes.

Botswana and South Africa have shown that removing obstacles to business entrepreneurship supports economic growth. The case of Botswana is notable. Just a decade ago, it graduated from least-developed-country status and now has emerged as a leader in Africa, ranking among the world's top 20 economies for ease of doing business, according to the Bank's report. The Commission on the Private Sector and Development's report, entitled "Unleashing Entrepreneurship", emphasized that private sectors within developing countries dwarf any conceivable contribution that could be made from abroad for development funding. An estimated 40 per cent of Africa's private wealth is held overseas. Good policies can help mobilize this wealth to contribute to Africa's progress.

While Africa's problems remain immense, no one should underestimate its entrepreneurial spirit and determination to create a prosperous future. Nor should anyone underestimate the international community's commitment to supporting that effort. Together, we will address the challenges on the continent and build a peaceful and prosperous future in Africa.

Mr. Løvald (Norway): Over the last few decades, we have witnessed the building of a more sound and stable basis for development and the eradication of poverty in many countries in Africa. We should acknowledge that the present state of affairs, where most African countries enjoy relatively stable political conditions and are governed by democratically elected Governments, represents a major achievement. And with achievement comes higher expectations of further progress.

Many African leaders are improving governance. Norway commends the African Union (AU), the New Partnership for Africa's Development and African countries on the progress they have made in making the African Peer Review Mechanism operational. We are looking forward to the first results next year.

Last week the Economic Commission for Africa published a synopsis of the findings in its forthcoming report entitled "Striving for Good Governance in Africa". This is a long-term challenge, which will require sustained political will and professional competence by African leaders and peoples. Good governance provides the foundation for combating poverty and is essential if Africa is to meet the Millennium Development Goals. But in order to meet the Goals, Africa also needs increased international support.

Next year, at the United Nations millennium review summit, we will be taking stock of our achievements. Today, Africa is not much closer to achieving the Goals than it was five years ago. We need a renewed push for increased and more effective development assistance. The international conditions for debt reduction, trade and investment must be improved and made more supportive of the Millennium Development Goals. We must secure consistency and coherence between the Goals that the global community sets itself and the framework that the same global community puts in place to achieve them.

Norway puts strong emphasis on the need for immediate peace dividends in the post-conflict recovery phase. People in conflict areas must see that peace pays. Integrated and multidisciplinary peace missions must be deployed where immediate relief efforts go hand in hand with investment in a broad range of development programmes.

Norway's separate budget chapter for transitional assistance was established specifically for this purpose and has provided us with a flexible funding instrument for enhancing the effectiveness of integrated United Nations missions. Norway also stresses the importance of working closely with and utilizing local civil society groups in peace-building efforts. In Africa, this often means churches and other faith-based groups operating at the community level.

We welcome the lead taken by the AU and African subregional organizations in conflict prevention and crisis management. The African Mission in Burundi was crucial in helping to stabilize the country and prepare the ground for the current United Nations peacekeeping force. Norway commends the efforts of the AU in Darfur and strongly supports the call by the Security Council to expand the AU mission, in particular by increasing the number of police and monitors. The peace and security agenda of the AU is vital for development and prosperity on the African continent. We will continue to be an active and committed partner of the AU in its efforts to build capabilities for conflict prevention and peace and security operations. We see this development as a commitment on the part of African States to assume greater responsibility for the resolution of conflict and the improvement of human rights in Africa.

Norway welcomes the increasing involvement of the Department of Peacekeeping Operations, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs and the United Nations Development Programme in building a working relationship with the AU and subregional organizations. We also welcome their efforts to build up the capacity of African organizations in the areas of security, humanitarian action and conflict management. We would welcome closer coordination between the efforts of those important bodies in the pursuit of their common objectives, particularly as regards post-conflict assistance and reconstruction. In particular, we call for strong coordinated action in the Democratic Republic of the Congo, where it has been established that several million people have died as a result of international and internal conflict over the last few years. Furthermore, the operation in Sierra Leone

succeeded, to a large extent, in bridging the gap between peace and development through an integrated and multidisciplinary peacekeeping and peace-building mission. Norway would like to congratulate the Secretary-General and the Secretariat for providing strategic leadership in that area.

Norway is deeply committed to Africa in its foreign policy and development cooperation. We intend to follow up that commitment. We will honour our pledge to increase official development assistance to our target of 1 per cent of gross national income. We will continue our efforts to fight poverty and to support the work of achieving the other Millennium Development Goals in partnership with African States. We will step up our support to the AU and subregional organizations and their efforts to build peace and security and foster regional cooperation in Africa.

Ms. Eid (Germany): We are here today to talk about Africa — a continent with enormous political momentum. Developments there are impressive, and their speed is breathtaking. We need only look back at the past five years and note how much Africa has been transformed in such a short period. The most visible evidence of that is the establishment of the African Union (AU). New principles, such as the possibility of humanitarian intervention and the abandonment of the dogma of non-intervention, and new institutions, such as, for example, the Peace and Security Council and the Pan-African Parliament, are proof of this new political momentum.

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) has played an important part in all of these developments. With NEPAD — a profound strategy for development and modernization — Africa has displayed its will to implement political reforms, recognizing that that is the only possible path to development and prosperity. The countries that have adopted NEPAD to achieve their vision of development look firmly to the future and underline the continent's responsibility for its own development, while also being honest with regard to their past mistakes.

The German Government sees NEPAD as the key reform strategy for the continent. It is a comprehensive approach aimed at bringing prosperity by creating a stable environment and making Africa attractive to the private sector, thus generating the economic growth needed to combat poverty. That is the right course to take.

The African Peer Review Mechanism is only one of the innovative ideas and instruments. Many countries have signed up for it and are turning words into deeds, as Ghana, Rwanda, Mauritius and Kenya have already done. I am confident that the findings of these reviews will go hand in hand with peer learning.

In the few years of its existence, NEPAD has breathed the spirit of reform into almost all sectors. We need only take, for example, the NEPAD Comprehensive Africa Agriculture Development Programme, which we discussed just two weeks ago at the African Partnership Forum. Germany is ready to support it. There, we all agreed that the question of land tenure and property rights is vital and that, without a special focus on the role of women in agriculture, the programme will fail.

The German Government, the other Group of Eight (G-8) countries and the European Union have supported this wind of change from the outset. The G-8 Africa Action Plan — a plan to support NEPAD reforms — was adopted in 2002 at the G-8 Summit in Kananaskis, Canada. The Action Plan is the G-8's political programme of support for the African countries' reform efforts. It focuses on the same priorities that have been identified by NEPAD, such as peace and security, good governance, a good climate for investment, education, health, agriculture, water and debt relief. Those topics are the key to sustainable development in Africa.

Our approach to our relationship with NEPAD countries and with those putting NEPAD reforms in place is to enter an enhanced partnership. Chancellor Gerhard Schröder's visit to Africa in January 2004 underlined that very clearly and was a signal of our support for the new political momentum in Africa.

At the heart of the whole process is NEPAD's philosophy that there can be no development without peace and stability. The forces of reform in Africa have recognized that independent efforts and home-grown plans for solutions to achieve peace and security will be the springboard for Africa's development. The AU's engagement, for example, in Darfur, is to be commended in that context.

The G-8 supports Africa's efforts to establish a peace and security architecture. In two workshops conducted in Berlin at the invitation of Chancellor Schröder, the G-8, in collaboration with its African partners, the AU and the United Nations, elaborated a

plan for promoting Africa's capacity to conduct its own peace missions by 2010. That plan was adopted at the G-8 Summit last year at Evian. Germany's focus is firmly fixed on strengthening Africa's own capacities, for example by supporting the Kofi Annan International Peacekeeping Training Centre in Ghana, the peacekeeping training centre in Nairobi and the AU Peace and Security Directorate.

In political terms, Africa has already grown in strength — and that political momentum must now be followed by economic momentum. The political and economic environment is crucial to the sustainable development of the African continent. The aim is to establish a social market economy that will generate prosperity and employment.

In its Africa Action Plan, the G-8 has committed to support that endeavour. K.Y. Amoako, the Executive Secretary of the United Nations Economic Commission for Africa (ECA), recently summed the matter up when he said that employment creation is key to resolving the issue of poverty reduction.

At a meeting of ECA in Addis Ababa, which ended yesterday, we discussed the role that the private sector must play in Africa. I left the meeting with the impression that there was a consensus that a market-led and State-enabled growth strategy was needed, that small-scale businesses are playing a crucial role in the strategy and that, as somebody has suggested, 2005 should therefore be declared the "Year of Small Businesses" in order to create the necessary awareness and action. Germany has been supporting the African private sector for many years now.

Growth and employment depend on a healthy investment climate. That means creating a functioning financial system, cutting back on red tape and creating legal certainty — particularly relating to land and property. Those are some decisive factors in making Africa an attractive location for business. At the same time, voluntary codes of conduct adopted by investors are also extremely important.

The Global Compact plays a key role in that respect. At the end of this week, African heads of State and Government and ministers will meet in South Africa to take stock for the first time of the progress made by NEPAD. Even if discussions on some issues have only just begun, NEPAD can already claim some undeniable successes — the main one being its very existence. Speaking here in the very heart of the United Nations, I would like to encourage the African heads of State and Government particularly to put every effort into NEPAD's continued development.

The NEPAD and G-8 Africa Action Plan provides the tools for us to tackle together the challenges in Africa. Never before have the prospects been so bright. When I look at the forces for reform in Africa and the determination to tackle the challenges at hand, I feel confident that Africa will continue to grow in strength, both politically and economically.

Germany is proud to be a partner in that endeavour, and will continue to support NEPAD by implementing our promises laid out in the G-8 Africa Action Plan.

Mr. de Rivero (Peru) (*spoke in Spanish*): Peru supports the statement delivered by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and also agrees with the points made by the representative of Barbados, who spoke on behalf of the Caribbean Community (CARICOM).

Historic ties of kinship and culture link Peru to Africa. For many Peruvians, it can be said that Africa was their motherland. That ancestral tie to Africa led Peru during the 1960s and 1970s to support Africans in their struggles for self-determination and unambiguously to condemn apartheid. Today, it means that we support all of the development efforts of Africa and are involved in five peacekeeping operations on that continent.

Globalization is currently marked by a paradox. On the one hand, it brings nations together through economic flows and digital telecommunications. On the other hand, it divides nations because of poverty, social exclusion and civil armed conflict. That trend towards fragmentation has become manifest in Africa, particularly through the proliferation of armed confrontation, which grew out of the disadvantages with which many African States emerged after winning their independence. The first disadvantage was the fact that those States generally had barely more than a single exportable product. Those circumstances impoverished them and forced them to take on enormous debts. The second disadvantage facing the new African States was the way in which their borders were drawn — reflecting colonial thinking and not taking into account existing ethnic structures.

Today, socio-political well-being for Africa is indispensable for the peace and stability of the international system. In the case of Africa, it is obvious that peace and security do not involve political, military or strategic factors alone. They depend essentially on socio-economic factors. Poverty and social exclusion are, particularly in Africa, the chief causes behind violence, instability and national fragmentation.

For Peru, Africa is a continent whose stability and development are vital to achieving globalization with a human face. In the decade ahead, the population of Africa will reach nearly 1 billion inhabitants, and what becomes of that mass of humanity will, without question, have a decisive impact on global peace and security. Peru, which hopes to take on the responsibility of becoming a non-permanent member of the Security Council for the period 2006-2007, believes that being concerned and doing something about how things evolve in socio-political terms on the African continent means being committed to international peace and security. Peru's commitment to Africa today finds expression in its participation in various peacekeeping operations in Africa, such as United Nations Operation in Côte d'Ivoire (UNOCI), the United Nations Mission in Liberia (UNMIL), the United Nations Mission in Ethiopia and Eritrea (UNMEE), the United Nations Organization Mission in the Democratic Republic of the Congo (MONUC) and the United Nations Operation in Burundi (ONUB).

By the same token, because of that commitment to peace and security in Africa, Peru today supports steps taken by the Peace and Security Council of the African Union — a mechanism that demonstrates that Africans are tackling the solving of their own problems. And this is extremely reassuring because Africa is thus building bulwarks against meddling by outsiders with their solutions that are divorced from African realities. Africa thus has begun to take its destiny into its own hands. Peru welcomes that. We are also delighted to see the report of the Secretary-General confirming a downward trend in conflict across the African continent, which explains the overall decline in the number of refugees by some 8 per cent. That new situation is something that African countries have wrought for themselves, and that turnaround fills us with hope.

Sub-Saharan Africa, given its export of predominantly raw materials with fluctuating prices, as well as its growing debt payments, is the most impoverished region in the developing world. Being also the most heavily indebted part of the developing world, this region consequently receives more World Bank and International Monetary Fund adjustment programmes than any other. Not withstanding that, the region has been abandoned by foreign investment. Today, sub-Saharan Africa is indebted to the tune $200 billion, a sum which devours a large portion of the region's gross national product.

The result has been that for over a quarter of a century, between 1975 and 2003, the per capita income of sub-Saharan African countries has declined, and was actually negative, at -2 per cent, while population grew explosively at an average rate of 2.8 per cent. The consequence of this has been the growing exclusion of people from society. Today most people in sub-Saharan Africa live on $1 or $2 a day.

Peru's view is that stability in Africa can be attained only by fighting against such social marginalization. For those reasons, the priority for the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) is to see to it that sub-Saharan Africa attain the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs). The statistics thus far are disappointing. Faced with that fact, the international community must act immediately, focusing official development aid particularly on access to health care, while redoubling efforts to fight HIV/AIDS and other infectious diseases.

The other great priority for Africa is to focus aid on making drinking water available, since Africa is rapidly urbanizing. However, in order for Africa to be able, on fair terms, to gain entry into the global economy, there must, above all, be favourable treatment of its debt and good prices for its basic export products, at the same time as access to markets for those products and the elimination of subsidies on both production and exports.

We hope the new Doha Round of negotiations will, once and for all, give Africa that special and differentiated treatment to allow it to increase its exports of basic commodities significantly.

Peru is involved in Africa, participating in a number of peacekeeping operations — five in fact — convinced as we are that bringing peace and development to the African continent is an indispensable element for international stability and because we feel that, by our presence, we are

contributing to making certain that Africans take charge of their own destiny.

Mr. Menon (Singapore): Fourteen years ago, during my posting in New York, I recall participating in the debate and discussions on an agenda item entitled "Critical economic situation in Africa". I can still recall vividly the rather pessimistic tone of the discussion at the time.

The debate took place at a time of great uncertainty, with the end of the cold war in sight. Africa, which like many other continents had been dragged into the quagmire of cold war politics, was feeling nervous, wondering what the future held for its States and citizens. Such feelings of gloom were understandable. The geopolitical strategic equation was rapidly changing and all of us were trying to adjust to the evolving situation.

Fourteen years on, some of our worst fears have come true. The problems in Liberia, Sierra Leone, Somalia, Rwanda and the Democratic Republic of the Congo might not have occurred if the cold war were still raging on today. But, it has not been all gloom and doom for Africa. We have witnessed the liberation of Namibia and South Africa from apartheid, and with that the emergence of new political, economic, social and cultural opportunities that their citizens never had before.

We have also witnessed good, if not strong, economic growth in a number of African countries, including Uganda, Ghana and Mozambique. More than 20 African countries achieved economic growth rates of more than 4 per cent in 2001. As Professor Jeffrey Sachs noted in an article in The Economist on 20 May 2004,

> "On anybody's list — the World Bank, Freedom House, Transparency International — a growing and significant number of African countries has the quality of leadership and governance to achieve economic development and to fight terrorism." (*The Economist (20 May 2004)*)

The Secretary-General himself noted in his annual report issued at the start of the United Nations General Assembly session that Africa today is afflicted by fewer serious armed conflicts then it was just six years ago. The Secretary-General added that Africa deserved much credit for that improvement, noting that the African Union, various subregional organizations and a number of Governments had become more active in mobilizing military forces for peacekeeping missions or in diffusing crises before they escalated into large-scale violence.

I am not suggesting that Africa is almost out of the woods or that it is going to be a fairytale that ends with everyone living happily ever after. We all know that Africa still faces many problems. Those include, inter alia, the lack of a well-integrated transportation infrastructure, massive debt, which unless cancelled or given new relief would make it extremely difficult to sustain economic growth, the lack of sufficient foreign direct investment flows and massive gaps in the health and education sectors, including the threat posed by AIDS.

To an outside observer, some of the problems might seem insurmountable, but, what I find most heartening is the fact that African leaders have decided that, rather than let these massive problems weigh them down, they will tackle them head-on, seizing the bull by its horns. The new confidence that Africa will be the master of its own destiny is both commendable and inspirational. The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), launched three years ago, testifies to this. Through NEPAD, Africa is telling us — the rest of the world — that it is committed to resolving its problems and that it takes responsibility for creating the right political conditions for development in the continent.

As the document launching NEPAD notes,

> "The Programme is anchored on the determination of Africans to extricate themselves and the continent from the malaise of underdevelopment and exclusion in a globalising world ...
>
> "We are convinced that an historic opportunity presents itself to end the scourge of underdevelopment that afflicts Africa. The resources, including capital, technology and human skills, that are required to launch a global war on poverty and underdevelopment exist in abundance and are within our reach ...
>
> "The New Partnership for Africa's Development ... is a call for a new relationship of partnership between Africa and the international community, especially the highly industrialised countries, to overcome the development chasm that has

widened over centuries ..." (*NEPAD Framework Document, Introduction*)

What is even more impressive about NEPAD is that it includes the enormously valuable African Peer Review Mechanism, with a work programme and a separate secretariat. I note that much progress has been made, with 23 countries to date signing up for the process. Such progress should be lauded. Strong national leadership backed by regional peer review offers a powerful combination to improve the performance of Governments.

As much as NEPAD is a regional initiative, it also acknowledges the important role of the international community in helping Africa to get out of its current difficulties. In that regard, all of us have an obligation to help within our means and in our own respective ways. Unless we all do so, there is the real danger that Africa will continue to lag behind the rest of the world, despite the best efforts of its leaders and peoples. If that happens, it will not only be Africa that will suffer. If the sense of injustice and unfairness becomes too great, one way or another, the problems of Africa will become those of the rest of the world. Economic globalization has also globalized the problems of poverty, terrorism and disease. In short, we have no choice but to work together to make sure that Africa and NEPAD succeed.

In that regard, Singapore has, on its own and through the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN), done its best to engage and help Africa. Singapore is a firm believer in human resource development. As a country with no natural resources, Singapore believes that human resource development is vital for economic and social progress. We have always focused our efforts on training our people so that they are equipped with the necessary skills to meet the challenges of their workplace and contribute to national development. This in turn is guided by the philosophy that it is better to teach a person to fish rather than to give him the fish, as the skills he acquires would allow him to catch as many fishes as he would like or need.

Human resource development is therefore the core objective of the Singapore Cooperation Programme (SCP), under which over 3,300 government officials from 43 African countries have come to Singapore for training since 1993, in a wide variety of areas such as public administration, civil aviation, finance and banking, healthcare, urban planning and development, tourism, education, port management, information technology, broadcasting, and trade and commerce.

Apart from training courses, Singapore has also hosted a number of African study-visit delegations annually. In recent years, we have also sponsored consultancy projects in response to specific requests made by individual African countries and leaders.

From 1999 to 2003, Singapore assisted South Africa in setting up its Construction Industry Development Board. Singapore assisted Botswana in setting up the Botswana National Productivity Centre in January 1993, and has since then continued to provide training, secondments and study visits for its officials. We take pride in the fact that Botswana is now a leading centre for productivity training in southern Africa.

Singapore also seconded a Port of Singapore Authority (PSA) consultant to Ghana to assist that Government in the development of the port of Tema from 1996 to 1997. We have also worked closely with other countries like Japan to provide training and development to several African countries. Under the Japan-Singapore Partnership Programme for the 21st Century (JSPP21), we have jointly trained over 150 African participants.

Apart from training courses, Singapore was also represented at the three Tokyo International Conferences on African Development, in 1993, 1998 and 2003. We participated as a development partner, bilaterally with Africa as well as in partnership with Japan under the Japan-Singapore Partnership Programme for the Twenty-first Century. The Tokyo International Conference on African Development process focuses on development initiatives in Africa as well as on other priority areas, such as governance, human resource development, infectious diseases, agricultural development, education and regional cooperation.

There is a Kikuyu saying that nobody is born wise. It is indeed a wise saying. All of us learn and grow with experience. Singapore discovered early on that there were few problems confronting us that some other Government had not met or solved. We therefore made it a practice to find out who else had encountered the problem we faced, how they tackled it and how successful they had been. Whether it was to build a

new airport or change our teaching methods, we would send our officials to visit and study those countries that had done it well. We preferred to climb on the shoulders of others who had gone before us. We did not believe in reinventing the wheel unnecessarily, except to suit our own specific circumstances. For the same reason, we believe in sharing our development experience with others, including our African friends. We recognize that our experience might not be relevant to some, but we are prepared to share with anyone who might find it useful. In that regard, we will do our best to ensure that our training courses remain relevant to the needs of our African friends. We will do what we can to help contribute, within our limited resources, to African development through human resource training. We welcome continued African participation in our Singapore Cooperation Programme courses.

It is a fact that, at the end of the day, there is only so much that all of us can do to help our African friends. That is a point that Africa itself acknowledged in the inspirational document that launched NEPAD in October 2001. Some of us may be disappointed that NEPAD has not yet produced the sort of results one would have hoped for. But let us not forget that NEPAD is only three years old. It will take time for NEPAD to deliver. What is more important at this stage is for Africa to stay the course that it has decided to embark upon and to stick with policies that will engender confidence in, and ensure cooperation from, its development partners. In that regard, I am reminded of some words of advice that Singapore's former Prime Minister and the architect of modern Singapore, Mr. Lee Kuan Yew, had to offer in his memoirs, entitled *From Third World to First*:

> "If I have to choose one word to explain why Singapore succeeded, it is confidence. This is what made foreign investors site their factories and refineries here. Within days of the oil crisis in October 1973, I decided to give a clear signal to the oil companies that we did not claim any special privilege over the stocks of oil they held in their Singapore refineries. If we blocked export from those stocks, we would have enough oil for our own oil consumption for two years, but we would have shown ourselves to be completely undependable. I met the chief executives or managing directors of all oil refineries on 10 November 1973. I assured them publicly that Singapore would share in any cuts they imposed on the rest of their customers on the principle of equal misery. Their customers were in places as far apart as Alaska, Australia, Japan and New Zealand, besides those in the region. This decision increased international confidence in the Singapore Government, that it knew its long-term interest depended on being a reliable place for oil and other business".

Well, the net result was that the oil refineries confidently expanded their operations in Singapore. By the 1990s, Singapore had become the world's largest oil trading centre, after New York and London. I have cited that anecdote because, like Singapore, Africa will face many painful and difficult moments — forks in the road — while proceeding with the strategy and policies outlined in NEPAD. There might even be the occasional temptation to avoid difficult decisions and go for easier, less painful options. It will require courage to stay the course. But, I am confident that my brothers and sisters from Africa will do the right thing. Singapore wishes them well. We would like to see a prosperous, thriving Africa, at peace with itself and the world. NEPAD offers an opportunity and a strategy to achieve that.

Mr. Butagira (Uganda): My delegation has already stated, in another United Nations forum, that the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Africa is tied to the implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), in which African countries unequivocally committed themselves to good governance and ensuring security and regional integration, and to focus on NEPAD priorities for sustainable development. For its part, Uganda is one of the 23 countries that have signed on to the African Peer Review Mechanism. Arrangements are being finalized to embark upon the peer review process. NEPAD priorities are being integrated into national development plans, such as poverty reduction strategy papers and medium-term expenditure frameworks.

Uganda has also established core outlets to move the NEPAD initiative forward. Those include the private sector, non-governmental organizations and a parliamentary forum — with the Minister for Finance, Planning and Economic Development coordinating the operationalization of the initiative. In Uganda, NEPAD will seek to build capacity within institutional centres to create competencies and awareness to address developmental needs.

The following projects are considered to have high priority under NEPAD's short-term plan: the Kenya-Uganda oil pipeline, institutional support for Kenyan, Ugandan and Tanzanian railways, the northern corridor road project, the establishment of one-stop border posts and country-to-country telecommunications involving the East African Community and the Common Market for Eastern and Southern Africa.

Uganda is also part of the NEPAD e-Schools Initiative, which seeks to impart information and communication technology skills to young Africans in primary and secondary schools.

As the Secretary-General concluded in his report, African countries have demonstrated their commitment to the implementation of NEPAD by earmarking scarce financial resources for priority areas. What Africa needs is international support to meet the challenges identified under NEPAD. In that regard, we wish to acknowledge the various international initiatives that have benefited, or will benefit, the implementation of NEPAD. Several key areas of interest to Africa's long-term sustainable development must be borne in mind if those efforts are to succeed.

The first of those is debt relief. The international community should consider the total cancellation of debt, especially that of heavily indebted poor countries, and the enactment of measures to address debt sustainability. Indeed, a number of loan partners have already granted debt cancellation as a measure of debt relief. Coupled with higher levels of grant financing, heavily indebted poor countries would be able to release resources to achieve the MDGs. For now, debt servicing has wiped out whatever financial assistance has been given to the least developed countries.

The second area is official development assistance (ODA). Africa has seen a modest increase in ODA. However, the current levels are well below the $50 billion in ODA required to achieve the MDGs by 2015. There is therefore a need for development partners to do more to reach the target of devoting 0.15 to 0.20 per cent of gross national income to the least developed countries. More deliberate targeting of foreign direct investment to the neediest countries in Africa is also necessary. Improving the quality and effectiveness of aid is also critical.

The third area pertains to trade, and specifically to implementing the Doha Development Agenda by addressing issues of particular concern to Africa, such as agricultural subsidies, tariff peaks and tariff escalations, supply-side constraints, instability in world commodity prices and capacity building. That would facilitate Africa's full integration into the world economy by granting market access for our products. It would also enable the continent to reap other benefits from globalization.

We call upon the international community to continue to support the efforts of the United Nations to mobilize international support for NEPAD by providing additional resources to the agencies that implement NEPAD programmes. In that respect, we commend the establishment of the Secretary-General's Advisory Panel on International Support for NEPAD. We also wish to acknowledge the important role being played by the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa, which has undertaken various activities aimed at the successful implementation of NEPAD.

The Secretary-General's report on the causes of conflict and the promotion of durable peace and sustainable development showed that Africa is on its way to resolving long-lasting wars and conflicts. African countries have embarked upon efforts to consolidate and expand good governance, democracy, the rule of law and economic reconstruction, as well as to combat poverty and underdevelopment. African countries have made serious efforts at the regional and continental levels to address conflicts by promoting peace negotiations and by brokering peace agreements.

The Peace and Security Council of the African Union has been instrumental in the management and resolution of conflicts in Africa. In the Great Lakes region, the African Union and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development (IGAD), with the support of the United Nations and other international partners, have facilitated the stabilization of Burundi and the Democratic Republic of the Congo. We are committed to the successful holding of the international conference on the Great Lakes region, which is to take place in Dar es Salaam in November of this year. The conference will focus on post-conflict reconstruction, on resettlement, rehabilitation and reintegration programmes and on establishing a framework for regional integration.

Africa needs the support of the international community to address the underlying causes of

conflict. Poverty and unemployment, especially among young people, can be a major cause of disaffection.

The proliferation of illicit arms goes hand in hand with the illicit exploitation of natural resources, and is a source of continued instability in Africa that needs urgent international action.

The HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria pandemics could also undermine the fragile peace and stability in Africa. While African countries bear the primary responsibility to address those pandemics, they are not in a position to adequately meet the financial requirements. For its part, Uganda has met the Millennium Development Goal of reversing HIV/AIDS infections. But Uganda faces serious challenges in controlling malaria. Even after abolishing taxes and tariffs on mosquito bed nets to make them more affordable, the majority of the population is still not able to afford such nets. The introduction of home-based management of fever by providing free packaged malaria treatment for children through community distribution and the prevention and control of malaria during pregnancy are also part of the Government's intervention. However, due to high levels of resistance to the inexpensive antimalarial medicines currently in use, as well to malaria's high mortality rate, Uganda will embark upon on the controlled use of DDT, in accordance with the World Health Organization's guidelines and recommendations.

In conclusion, the strong link between poverty and the burden of disease calls for international cooperation to mobilize adequate resources to prevent, treat and control HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis. There is also a need for capacity-building, research and development to ensure the provision of affordable and more effective drugs to combat those diseases.

Mr. Wali (Sudan) (*spoke in Arabic*): Sudan would like to welcome the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), an African initiative and product intended solely to benefit Africa, that saw the light of day at the end of lengthy negotiations that marked a decisive turning point on the path towards rebuilding and developing Africa.

My delegation would like to thank the Secretary-General for his comprehensive report highlighting both the measures taken by Member States to implement their overall policies and the support provided by the Organization to NEPAD last year. The African continent has unequivocally reaffirmed its commitment, will and determination to emerge from the long tunnel that was the legacy of many centuries into the expansive space of reconstruction and development, as reflected in NEPAD. NEPAD was designed to ensure Africa's economic liberalization to achieve progress in priority sectors, including health, agriculture, drinking water, sanitation and science and technology.

The report of the Secretary-General states that the international community has launched a number of broad measures to make NEPAD a reality. To varying degrees, the serious strides made by African countries in priority areas give us cause for optimism. That progress serves to strengthen our determination to tailor NEPAD policies to the continent's needs and to allocate in our budgets the resources necessary to reach the priority goals of the Partnership.

The debt burden of African countries impedes them from meeting the needs of NEPAD and is a major obstacle to development. We therefore require both bilateral and multilateral aid. In particular, we must increase untied aid and revise trade policies so that they benefit Africa and allow it to meet both its needs and the objectives of NEPAD.

The increased awareness that exists with regard to the need to intensify cooperation among the countries of the South is undoubtedly playing a major role in international cooperation for development. That, in turn, will contribute positively to the implementation of NEPAD. South-South cooperation will also produce benefits for all stakeholders.

In closing, my delegation calls for increased support by the international community and the United Nations of NEPAD in order to make it a reality. That would make it possible to make stronger efforts in development for Africa, and to improve the continent's integration into the international community.

Mr. Hachani (Tunisia) (*spoke in French*): The international community's growing interest in Africa, and the interest of the United Nations system in particular, reflects the worldwide realization of the urgent need to establish a true partnership for development for our continent, which has suffered for decades from the horrors of armed conflicts, pandemics, instability, poverty and marginalization. Nevertheless, one need only read the recently issued second report of the Secretary-General on the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD)

(A/59/206) to realize that, despite the determination and commitment of African countries, implementing that major African programme requires greater mobilization on the part of the international community and better coherence in its intervention tools to align them to the guidelines adopted by the Millennium Summit, which clearly underscored the need to respond to Africa's specific needs.

In many cases, the economies of African countries are continuing to regress, notably due to the plunge in commodity prices — which is the main source of income for the majority of the countries of the continent — the application of protectionist measures in the area of trade, the great instability in foreign exchange and the inadequate levels of official development assistance (ODA) and foreign direct investment.

The report of the Secretary-General on the implementation of NEPAD makes an urgent call to place Africa at the centre of a global partnership for development focused on three main pillars: increasing official development assistance; restoring the trade balance by significantly expanding access to markets for the key products of developing countries and dismantling both tariff and non-tariff barriers; and drafting an outline for the resolution of the problems associated with debt, whose effects significantly curtail the potential of African countries and divert resources that should be devoted to projects of overriding importance, such as those in the areas of education, health and basic infrastructure.

Africa is surely the region most affected by the contrasts and paradoxes of the current world environment. In that regard, I would like to refer to the new study recently issued by the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development on Africa's excessive debt burden. Among other things, the study concluded that the African debt situation was incompatible with the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals. The negative net transfer of financial resources, which is another way of subsidizing prosperous economies, severely penalizes economic and human development alike.

For Africa's partners, turning that paradoxical situation around must be the first step towards making their development policies more coherent and enabling Africa to become a net beneficiary of the back-and-forth of financial flows. Creating such an environment conducive to the development of Africa is both a pillar in the process of enacting NEPAD's priorities and a prerequisite to the establishment of a stable permanent balance between the objectives of Africa's development and the constraints of globalization.

Far from being a cause for despair, that rather bleak picture of the situation in Africa should prompt the international community, Governments, the United Nations system, international institutions, the private sector and civil society to redouble their efforts, as part of a genuine development partnership based upon solidarity and international cooperation, to allow Africa to relaunch itself, adapt and accelerate its process of integration into the world economy.

The Goals set out in the Millennium Declaration to be met by 2015 are certainly ambitious. But they are attainable, if the commitments entered into in 2000 and at major international conferences, including those held in Monterrey and Johannesburg, are followed up in good faith through an upsurge in solidarity with Africa. United Nations agencies on the ground have a major role to play in that regard by lending an operational perspective to the worldwide consensus against poverty, thereby making it possible for Africa to attain the rapid development so often denied to it.

At a time when Africa is making noteworthy progress towards resolving conflict, which for so long stymied the development of many countries; when the continent is demonstrating its determination to take its destiny into its own hands by adopting plans to restructure and improve; and at a moment when Africa is mobilizing to realize the goals established by NEPAD — a comprehensive and integrated programme for the development of Africa and the basis for cooperation with its partners — we must not lose sight of the fact that that real determination to take charge cries out for financial, human and technical resources that are beyond the means of many African countries. That explains the structural need for support from the outside, a responsibility that in many ways is incumbent upon the entire international community.

In conclusion, I would like to express the appreciation of the delegation of Tunisia for the tireless efforts made with regard to the implementation of NEPAD by Mr. Ibrahim Gambari, the Secretary-General's Special Adviser on Africa. We also hope that the formal commitment made to provide his office with

the resources it needs as the focal point for the NEPAD in the Secretariat will not be called into question.

Mr. Mohd. Radzi (Malaysia): Malaysia associates itself with the statement made earlier by the representative of Qatar on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, as well as with the statement made by the representative of Laos on behalf of the member States of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations.

As we are aware, Africa is a vast and diverse continent with its own uniqueness, special needs and strengths. For many years, the continent has drawn international attention with regard to the struggle against poverty, hunger, communicable diseases, armed conflict and myriad other woes that have hindered the achievement of sustainable development and political stability for most of the continent's countries.

The New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) promises to bring about a changed social, political and economic outlook in Africa. The report of the Secretary-General on the status of the implementation of NEPAD (A/59/206) is very encouraging. It is gratifying to know that progress has been achieved, albeit not evenly spread across all countries in Africa. We are especially encouraged by the fact that development programmes and projects have been well planned and spread out to cover all essential sectors, in order to move African countries to a higher level of economic development. We are indeed pleased to note from the report that the past year has been marked by progress in developing sectoral policy frameworks, implementing specific programmes and projects and establishing expenditure targets for a specific sector's priorities.

We support the current programmes and projects focusing on key areas of infrastructure development — health, education, the environment, tourism, agriculture, science and technology and industrialization. From the perspective of Malaysia's own development experience, those are among the sectors that are essential to launch a country towards greater progress and development. We note, for example, the programme to convert 600,000 African schools into e-schools.

Malaysia has welcomed and strongly supported the efforts to bring an integrated approach to development in Africa through NEPAD. We congratulate the countries of Africa for supporting and adopting that initiative in their own development agenda. We applaud the leaders of African countries for their continuing commitment and determination to take bold steps in bringing about economic growth, promoting sustainable development, reducing poverty and achieving food security and stability in their respective countries.

As confirmed by the Secretary-General in his report, NEPAD has made some impact on Africa. There is no doubt that those African countries that have registered progress through NEPAD have proven that development and progress are achievable in Africa just like elsewhere. That achievement will certainly serve as an encouragement for other African States to emulate. Their experiences could be offered as best practices to fellow African countries.

Malaysia would like to emphasize that implementation of programmes and projects under NEPAD will succeed with continuing external assistance. The international community, in particular our development partners and the United Nations system, should continue to provide the necessary assistance to sustain the current positive momentum for change under NEPAD. There is only so much that the African countries can do and we are all aware of their current limitations and constraints — especially in financial resources — particularly among the least developed countries in Africa. We are encouraged to note that the international community has responded quite positively with a series of international actions geared towards aiding the implementation of NEPAD, including the establishment of the Commission for Africa by the Government of the United Kingdom.

The financial needs required to meet the objectives set for NEPAD have been clearly defined at various conferences and summits. We are aware that efforts involving development partners, international and regional financial institutions and the United Nations system have been initiated to provide the necessary resources to finance programmes and projects under NEPAD. We welcome debt relief efforts that have the potential to benefit African countries, especially the decision by G-8 leaders to extend the duration of the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative to 2006.

However, we share the concern of African countries that more needs to be done to address the important question of their debt sustainability to ensure a long-term solution to the debt problem faced by

developing countries — especially the least developed countries, the majority of which are in Africa. In that connection, we urge the development partners, particularly the creditor countries of the North, to look beyond the HIPC Initiative for ways and means, including new and innovative ideas, to ease the situation and assist affected countries to acquire a firmer and sustainable national financial standing. We also wish to join others in echoing the call to development partners to fulfil their pledges regarding their share of official development assistance targets intended for African countries in order to enable the full implementation of NEPAD.

As has been expressed in many forums, we believe that trade is one of the practical and effective means to assist African countries, since the majority of them are agricultural and commodity-producing and exporting countries. Developed countries must continue to make further efforts to open up their markets to exports from African countries, particularly agricultural products and commodities. Developed countries must also undertake the necessary measures to eliminate their agricultural export subsidies and to reduce trade-distorting domestic farm support with a view to helping African countries earn their fair share from their agricultural exports. Only then can we talk about exploring the potential for raising domestic sources of financing for development in Africa.

It has been acknowledged, including in the Secretary-General's report, that South-South cooperation could play a crucial role in complementing and supplementing other efforts to promote development in Africa. The international community should promote South-South cooperation under the many existing initiatives among developing countries. Doing so could serve as another important track to promote growth in Africa.

Malaysia is a firm believer in the potential of South-South cooperation. For more than two decades Malaysia has incorporated programmes on South-South cooperation in our foreign policy and national development plans. In its modest way, Malaysia has shared its development experiences with other developing countries, inviting many African countries over the past 20 years to participate in various development-related training programmes under the Malaysian Technical Cooperation Programme. Besides offering technical and administrative training, Malaysia is also a strong supporter of, active participant in and initiator of, and has played host to, development dialogues with Africa, in particular the Langkawi International Dialogue process. We are also a strong supporter of and active participant in the Southern Africa International Dialogue process and have participated without fail in the Tokyo International Conference on African Development initiated by Japan.

In translating policy into action, Malaysia has encouraged its private sector to seek partnerships and investments in many African countries with the objective of sharing our development experiences in areas essential to Africa and participating in the nation-building process there. We believe that the presence and involvement of our private sector in African development, through its investments and business ventures, would contribute to the realization of various NEPAD objectives. We hope that the best practices in other developing countries, especially those related to the creation of a conducive domestic environment to attract and sustain foreign direct investment, can be of great value to many African countries.

My delegation is most encouraged by the fact that the African countries are committed to NEPAD. They have demonstrated their resolve to undertake the necessary changes to enhance the potential of Africa towards people-centred, robust growth and lasting political stability. Many important African initiatives have been established that empower Africans themselves to enhance the coordination, planning, implementation and monitoring of NEPAD programmes and projects, and they are functioning well.

While the African continent is making efforts to draw up and implement plans of action to create a conducive and enabling environment for the success of NEPAD, it is imperative that the international community provide the much-needed support to ensure that Africa succeeds in that endeavour. The success of NEPAD would certainly bring tremendous benefits for the global community.

Mr. Sunaga (Japan): First of all, I would like to thank the Secretary-General for his report (A/59/285), which makes it clear that substantive progress has been made by African countries in terms of promoting peace and sustainable development.

The Government of Japan is particularly appreciative of the establishment of the Peace and

Security Council under the auspices of the African Union (AU), which can be a meaningful institution for promoting durable peace on the continent.

One sign that there has already been some improvement is the prompt response by the nations of Africa to the crisis in Darfur, where the Peace and Security Council decided to deploy its 300-member monitoring and protection force. Another good sign is the establishment of the African Peer Review Mechanism of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), which, Japan believes, is a useful instrument for monitoring sustainable development. Japan sees it as an emerging indication of ownership by African countries of the process of eliminating corruption and securing human rights.

All those positive developments, however, cannot hide the fact that there are still enormous difficulties and challenges to be faced. Japan shares that view that much needs to be done for the new African initiatives to take hold. For instance, the capacity of African regional organizations, including the AU, certainly needs to be enhanced. The international community, for its part, needs to support the efforts of African countries; otherwise the precious momentum created by the African initiative will have been for nought.

The Government of Japan has been intensifying its efforts in support of African countries since the inception of the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) in 1993. The key principles TICAD has promoted are ownership and partnership. Upholding those principles, TICAD III, held last year, proposed strengthening partnership with NEPAD. Indeed, a partnership has been unfolding in three priority areas, namely, the consolidation of peace, poverty reduction through economic growth, and human-centred development.

As we all know, peace is a precondition for development. Japan attaches particular importance to continuous support from the time of the peace process ending a conflict to the subsequent reconstruction phase. For that reason, Japan continues to support the activities of African regional organizations, including the African Union and the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) in the areas of conflict prevention, management and resolution.

Japan also provides humanitarian assistance to Liberia and the Sudan. Especially for the Sudan, Japan has decided to supply additional humanitarian emergency assistance in the amount of $15 million in light of the deteriorating humanitarian conditions in the Darfur region this past September. That is in addition to $6 million in emergency assistance that Japan has provided so far, thus making the total assistance provided by Japan $21 million.

Japan intends to help Burundi in its efforts towards sustainable development, through a trust fund for human security, which was created by the Japanese Government through the United Nations.

Secondly, Japan believes that economic growth can be a strong force for development. Providing official development aid (ODA) in such areas as transportation, information and communication technology and energy certainly helps create an environment conductive to the development of trade and development. That, in turn, surely produces economic growth — but ODA alone is not enough. The multilateral trade system needs to be made more favourable to African countries, and Japan is making efforts to that end, as well. For instance, Japan grants duty free and quota free preferences on 29 per cent of its imports from the least developed countries and provides no export subsidies to Japanese agricultural producers.

In addition, Japan has been taking the initiative in expanding trade and investment between Asia and Africa. We will host the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD) Asia-Africa Trade and Investment Conference from 1 to 2 November 2004.

Thirdly, in keeping with the concept of human security, Japan promotes human-centred development, which places human resources development at the foundation of nation-building. Indeed, empowerment of people through education and health care is indispensable for sustainable development. With that in mind, Japan will mobilize $2 million in ODA to support education in African countries. It also attaches high priority to the fight against HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis, malaria and other infectious diseases.

We are in the run-up to a series of important events next year, in which Africa will again become a major item on the agenda of the international community. Japan renews its commitments to work together with African countries and the rest of the world for peace and development in Africa.

Mr. Badji (Senegal) (*spoke in French*): I welcome the opportunity to speak in this plenary debate to discuss progress made in the implementation of the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), causes of conflict in Africa and the anti-malaria campaign. The special attention given to NEPAD by African leaders and peoples and by Africa's development partners prove — if proof were needed — the great importance of including the item on the agenda of the current session.

The report of the Secretary-General on the New Partnership for Africa's Development and progress in implementation and international support (A/59/206), gives us a full picture of the activities undertaken by the parties to this contract of hearts and minds that binds Africa to the international community and to the United Nations system.

It is encouraging to note, in the report, that African countries have begun to make their common vision a reality with patience and determination, as is shown by initiatives in the areas of the economy and good governance, among others.

From the standpoint of the economy, our determination to set Africa's recovery on a solid basis has been shown by the choice of 20 priority programmes, in the areas of energy, transportation, water, hygiene and information and communications technology. In the area of good governance, progress made in setting up the African Peer Review Mechanism, which has been joined by some 20 countries, is further evidence of our resolve to conduct honest, transparent policies.

In support of those African efforts, the report of the Secretary-General tells us that commendable initiatives — which should be encouraged — have been taken by the two other stakeholders in the contract that I mentioned before, namely, the international community and the United Nations system.

We have all noted that the results of our partnership are, on the whole, positive. That is borne out by the facts and figures. We must agree, however, with the Secretary-General that despite positive results achieved through our common efforts, much remains to be done. Now, we, as Africans, must go beyond those conceptual advances and fully invest our efforts in priority projects that we have identified.

As far as our partners are concerned, I would simply reiterate the urgent steps that should be taken in the three areas of cooperation that are of critical importance for Africa — official development assistance (ODA), trade and debt. Concerning official development assistance, the arguments made by the Secretary-General to increase ODA levels for Africa and to harmonize and simplify procedures, are convincing, therefore I do not need to repeat them. I would merely stress the fact that donor countries that have not yet done so should clearly commit themselves to a precise timetable for attaining the goal of 0.7 per cent as soon as possible. We believe that step is essential for mobilizing the additional official development assistance that Africa needs in order to achieve the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs).

Concerning trade, the Doha Round has still not given evidence of its having been a development round. For that reason, many previous speakers have called for access being granted to African products to the markets of the developed countries and for the abolition of agricultural subsidies and for stable commodity prices. I would now like to request that our countries be authorized, within the framework of the multilateral trade negotiations, to pay temporary subsidies to some of our industries, whose survival would otherwise be threatened.

The problem of debt has been a common refrain in our statements because, despite the efforts that our countries have made, we would be deluding ourselves if we were to believe that African economies could reach the 7 per cent growth rate that is required to attain the Millennium Development Goals in the absence of a lasting solution to that major constraint.

While the total cancellation of the debt of the poor countries of sub-Saharan Africa is certainly an economic need, it is, above all, a moral requirement, given the undeniable responsibility of our creditors for the emergence of this crisis. However, until a consensus-based solution is found to this question and a definition of a sustainable level of indebtedness is reached, it would be helpful if our partners would accept a suspension of debt-servicing payments, with no additional interest payments.

Aid, trade and debt are the three priority areas in which urgent action is expected of our partners. That is what is required for the process started by NEPAD to move forward. However, actions in that regard must be

supplemented by other initiatives in the agricultural field and, at the international level, in the area of globalization. Why agriculture? Because only a green revolution could put an end to the hunger and malnutrition that afflict millions of people in sub-Saharan Africa.

The Secretary-General believes that it is not information that is lacking to bring about such a green revolution, but the political will to translate that information into action. Unfortunately, in the absence of such political will, as the Secretary-General has said, needless hunger continues to ravage lives and the future of an entire continent.

Why do I mention globalization? Because it is giving rise to a trend towards the exclusion of Africa, which could transform our continent into a hotbed for ideologies of intolerance and violence. We must therefore reverse that trend through the strategy of change advocated by the World Commission on the Social Dimension of Globalization, whose excellent report I should like to commend.

Since 1986, Africa has been bound to the international community by three successive contracts: first, the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development; secondly, the United Nations New Agenda for the Development of Africa in the 1990s; and, thirdly and finally, NEPAD.

The characteristics of each of these programmes and the historical circumstances in which they were launched are far from identical, but they are similar to the extent that the lack of resources that caused the first two to fail continues to characterize the first stage of the implementation of NEPAD. Only a collective leap forward — which the international community can certainly make when circumstances dictate — can save NEPAD from the fate that befell its predecessors.

Mrs. Laohaphan (Thailand): My delegation associates itself with the statements made earlier by the Permanent Representative of Qatar, Ambassador Al-Nasser, on behalf of the Group of 77 and China, and by the representative of the Lao People's Democratic Republic, Ambassador Kittikhoun, on behalf of the Association of South-East Asian Nations (ASEAN).

The Thai delegation notes with satisfaction the attention that the international community has given to the urgency of Africa's problems as well as its commitment to solving those problems on a priority basis. We are very much encouraged by the strong commitments and political will expressed at the High-level Meeting on achieving the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) in Africa, held here in New York on 23 September 2004.

Despite that encouraging trend, there is a need to be mindful of the cautions expressed by Mr. Mark Malloch Brown, Administrator of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). In his speech to the fifty-seventh annual conference of the United Nations Department of Public Information and Non-governmental Organizations, held on 10 September 2004, the Administrator warned that Africa is still lagging behind the rest of the world and urged that more aid be given to help Africa achieve the Millennium Development Goal of halving poverty by 2015.

He also stated that the actual trend line for this year was even worse and that, if the current trend continues, poverty will never be halved in Africa. Thailand shares the same concerns and agrees with his suggestion that the united support of civil society should be a key component of the political coalition that will get us back on track. We also agree with the emphasis he placed on the importance of micro-credit and a strong domestic private sector in progressing towards the Goals, as our experience in Thailand has shown that small and medium enterprises and local entrepreneurship can play an active role in stimulating economic growth and promoting well-being at the grass-roots level.

Thailand also joins the international community in supporting the implementation of the MDGs in Africa. We are firmly committed to helping Africa help itself and achieve sustainable development and economic growth, particularly in areas where our experience has proved successful, such as agricultural and rural development through the "One Village, One Product" project; small and medium enterprises (SMEs), with the support of the "Village Fund" project; tourism; and health.

Another area of importance is alternative development, which aims at strengthening the grass-roots economy through readily available resources and practical applications of technology. Thailand looks forward to sharing this experience with African

countries during the Ministerial International Conference on Alternative Development: Sufficiency Economy, which Thailand will hold in November of this year in Bangkok. At that Conference, we hope to be able to extend our cooperation to participating Governments using four approaches, namely enhancing economic linkages, technical cooperation, exchange of experiences and practices, and cooperation in addressing global challenges. These four approaches are guided by the key principles of promoting self-help, ownership and partnership.

In enhancing its link with Africa, Thailand participated for the first time in the African Union Extraordinary Summit as a guest of Burkina Faso, and this November Mr. Surakiart Sathirathai, Minister of Foreign Affairs of Thailand, will attend the Francophone Summit, again in Burkina Faso. For its part, Thailand will continue to strengthen its partnership with Africa.

While Thailand as an individual country is strengthening its ties with countries in Africa, ASEAN as a group is also establishing linkages to promote partnership for development with NEPAD, which, we believe, will serve as a showcase of African-led development.

In partnership with donor countries and international organizations, Thailand is expanding its technical cooperation to African countries. In addition to its participation under the Tokyo International Conference on African Development (TICAD), Thailand is strengthening its cooperation with Japan under the Japan International Cooperation Agency (JICA), and with France under the French Development Agency, and is currently contemplating doing the same with the United Kingdom and Belgium in providing technical cooperation and training courses for African personnel. Our endeavours involve participation with United Nations agencies such as the United Nations Development Programme, the United Nations Population Fund (UNFPA) and UNICEF in increasing development cooperation with Africa.

Our cooperative effort is aimed at human resources development and adding value to low-income-earning primary products so as to increase agricultural productivity and help diversify Africa's economies. Thailand stands ready to contribute to the capacity-building of African business entrepreneurs, who will serve as engines and catalysts of economic growth in their countries.

Malaria and the HIV/AIDS epidemic continue to be major threats to human development and undermine the potential progress of Africa. With that in mind, Thailand is now working with African countries on a technical cooperation programme on HIV/AIDS prevention and treatment by supplying essential medical equipment, drugs and necessary facilities, granting scholarships to African medical staff for their training in Thailand, dispatching a technical team to Africa for training courses and seminars for its African counterparts, and campaigning for public awareness of HIV/AIDS.

Thailand has taken a long road in its campaign against malaria. After several decades of relentless effort, which eventually bore fruit, Thailand is now succeeding in reducing both the prevalence of malaria and its death rate. A number of malaria prevention efforts have also been implemented, including the use of insecticide-treated nets, DDT residual spraying, thermal fogging and antilarval measures. In that regard, Thailand is looking forward to sharing its experiences and extending its continued support to the coordinated efforts to bring the malaria crisis in Africa under control and achieve the Millennium Development Goals. We take this opportunity to reaffirm our commitment to joining hands with the United Nations and the international community in helping Africa achieve sustainable development as well as sustained peace and security.

Mr. Tekle (Eritrea): The Eritrean delegation takes this opportunity to extend its gratitude to the Secretary-General for the progress report on the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD), contained in document A/59/206.

African States overwhelmingly adopted NEPAD as a comprehensive framework and programme of action for African renaissance and development. It quickly received widespread support from Governments outside Africa, intergovernmental organizations, including the United Nations and the European Union, and non-governmental organizations.

Presumably, NEPAD received such support because it is radically different from all previous African development plans and because it incorporates the United Nations Millennium Development Goals as its core components. It is also commended because the

programme will be owned, led and managed by Africans. Such support was expressed by the slight increase in aid from traditional donor countries and the creation by the United Nations Secretary-General of the Office of the Special Adviser on Africa in May 2003. The Secretary-General also established an Advisory Panel on International Support for the New Partnership for African Development to assist him in monitoring international support for NEPAD. It is also encouraging to note that the United Nations system is already mainstreaming NEPAD into its protocols and programmes. Indeed, notable cooperation has taken place between the NEPAD secretariat and regional and subregional organizations.

NEPAD, which is underpinned by the twin concepts of ownership and partnership, has lofty ideals. It aspires to make the African Union much more effective in conflict prevention and, by ensuring sustainable peace on the continent, to nurture a culture of democracy, to create a solid ground for democratic institutions and good corporate governance, and to establish with the developed countries a partnership based on mutual benefit, mutual respect, transparency and accountability. Focusing on the vulnerable and the marginalized, its goals are to eradicate poverty, reverse economic malaise and achieve sustainable growth and development as quickly as practicable.

NEPAD has scored some modest achievements during the first three years of its existence. The African Peace and Security Council now has its headquarters in Cairo, while South Africa is to host the African Parliament. The Economic, Social and Cultural Council is in its last stages of formation and should begin its advisory operations in the near future.

The African Peer Review Mechanism enables African countries to exchange views and share experiences in the promotion and consolidation of human rights and good governance — both political and economic — as well as sound economic management. African ministers of agriculture have elaborated a Comprehensive African Agricultural Development Plan that, it is hoped, will constitute the essential basis for concrete projects in specific countries and regions. Ministers of health have reaffirmed the commitment of African Governments to allocate 15 per cent of their respective budgets to health, while the ministers of education have evolved a programme for a fast-track expansion of primary education. A tourism strategy and programmes for infrastructure development are also in place. It is auspicious to note that the NEPAD Heads of State Implementation Committee has taken tentative measures that it hopes will assist the realization of the NEPAD programmes.

All this augurs well for Africa, and the above achievements must be commended. However, it must not lead us to believe that NEPAD is not beset by obstacles and challenges or does not face dangers.

The first major source of worry is the absence of peace in many parts of the continent. Africa is the only continent that is being ravaged by a multiplicity of inter-State and internal conflicts. We must heed the words of Secretary-General Kofi Annan, who in his report last year warned us that peace, security and stability must be given the highest priority in NEPAD's agenda — indeed, in any African agenda. We are deluding ourselves if we believe that there will be development without peace or South-South cooperation between African countries in conflict.

Due recognition must be given to the creation of the Peace and Security Council by the African Union. We also recognize that the African Union is considering the creation of subregional organizations and revitalizing those that actually exist. However, the Organization of African Unity, especially in the final two decades of its existence, and the African Union during its first three years have not played any credible role or, on their own, achieved any meaningful results in the prevention and resolution of conflict. Moreover, the African Union is unlikely to achieve any results in the future if there is no revolutionary change in attitude and political will, accompanied by impartiality, transparency and accountability.

Indeed, whatever success was achieved in Africa by Africans was the result of subregional efforts where outstanding and exemplary roles were played by the Economic Community of West African States, the Southern African Development Community and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development.

Secondly, good governance cannot be imported or imposed by external forces, as African experience with the Bretton Woods institutions adequately demonstrates. A peer review mechanism is magnificent; but can it be expected to operate meaningfully in an international system in which the State, with its real or perceived national interests, is still the dominant actor? Is it conceivable that an

organization that cannot even take a definitive position, let alone enforcement action, on a court decision — the implementation of which it has guaranteed by being a signatory to a treaty — will act or make a pronouncement on a member's malgovernance? The evidence is clear that the African Union, as it exists and conducts itself at this time, does not have either the necessary capacity or the collective political will and resolve to prevent or settle conflicts.

The third major obstacle to African development is funding. It is a fact that almost 50 per cent of African States are experiencing negative economic growth and development and are actually poorer now than they were 10 or 20 years ago, and that it would take them almost half a century to achieve the Millennium Development Goals. It is evident and well understood that the enormous challenges of food security, safe and clean water, health and education cannot be met by internal African sources alone and that the success of NEPAD must rely heavily on foreign assistance.

This must be a source of grave concern to a programme that is reputedly owned by Africans. Commitments of assistance have been made by the developed countries at several international forums. Promises have been made to reduce or cancel debt, increase official development assistance (ODA) and foreign direct investment, redeem pledges to the Trust Fund for the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative (HIPC) and to contribute meaningful assistance to ensure the success of NEPAD. Yet the Secretary-General's report reveals that, while there have been modest increases in ODA and some improvement in debt reduction and cancellation, as well as contributions to the HIPC Fund, international support to Africa is far below that needed to achieve the targets of the Millennium Development Goals and that "There remains an urgent and continuing need to improve the quality and effectiveness of aid to countries in the region" (*A/59/206, para. 41*) and "There is now an increasing call for a new framework for debt sustainability" (*ibid., para. 36*).

This must be a source of serious concern to a programme that exalts itself as self-reliant. Yet this is not all. It must also be worrying that, in addition to the $64 billion needed to kick-start NEPAD, its agricultural programme envisages an external assistance package of $180 billion, while authors of its educational programme have determined that $22 billion is needed to realize the goals of the programme. Needs in other sectors have not been estimated or published. This is an enormous amount of money, so one simple question must be asked: where is it going to come from? Therein lies the inherent danger to NEPAD.

NEPAD must have access to financing if it is to succeed. Ideally, the funds would be raised essentially by African States, yet this does not seem likely either now or in the immediate future in the absence of, inter alia, a truly vibrant private sector, an efficient taxation system and credible fund-raising capacity. This, then, makes international assistance imperative. Yet such assistance, when it comes, seems to be possible only with preconditions. At this point, there seems to be no meeting of minds on this issue between the major sources of assistance, the G-8 and African States, in spite of the cheers and applause that have accompanied NEPAD.

It is said that Africa's development will contribute to great economic growth in the world. It is, therefore, declared that it would be logical for the international community to understand Africa's predicament and to be generous in honouring their commitments. African Governments must be realistic, and above all they must put their houses in order. They must have peace — a just peace, peace anchored in the rule of law and the sanctity of the Charter and treaty agreements. Only then can they hope to develop and free their peoples from the shackles of want and fear.

Mr. Aliyev (Azerbaijan): My delegation welcomes this opportunity to focus the attention of the current session on development prospects for Africa through the joint debate on agenda items 38 (a) and (b).

We extend our appreciation to the Secretary-General for his reports, presented separately under the relevant agenda items (A/59/206 and 285), and we support the recommendations contained therein.

These issues underscore the concerns and challenges that African countries are facing in situations of war, violent conflicts — including protracted ones — and civil strife, which remain the main sources of hunger, poverty and disease.

In accordance with the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter, the Organization, which is designed to promote peace and security through preventing conflicts or their escalation, must spare no

effort to find just and lasting solutions to these crises. Taking human rights aspects into consideration during the settlement of armed conflicts is vital. In this respect, we commend the work of the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in elaborating the respective policy framework.

We share the assumption that primary responsibility for the solution of armed conflict rests in the hands of Member States. However, without consistent support of the international community for the efforts of affected Member States and the full implementation of mandates given to the mediators, chances for any progress in conflict resolution are rather weak.

Meanwhile, we support the important role the Economic and Social Council plays in coordinating international development efforts in African countries emerging from conflict. We believe that the dialogue on financing recovery between the Economic and Social Council and the Bretton Woods institutions developed in the cases of Burundi and Guinea-Bissau could be extended to other ad hoc advisory groups on affected countries.

Given this positive experience, we call for enhancing the dialogue between the Security Council and the Economic and Social Council in the field of promoting long-term development programmes, taking into account the mandate and comparative advantage of the latter.

My country warmly welcomes signs of significant development taking place on the African continent. We consider the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) to be a comprehensive development framework, and we commend the efforts and contribution made by Mr. Ibrahim Gambari, Special Adviser of the Secretary-General on Africa, in advancing NEPAD's objectives. Another clear demonstration of African leaders' commitment to NEPAD are the established targets for allocation of identified sectoral priorities. Furthermore, we welcome the progress registered in the African Peer Review Mechanisms.

Meanwhile, further external support is of paramount importance. Capacity-building, infrastructure development and wider development in the application of science and technology are crucial for attaining the sustainable development goals for African countries.

Sharing similar development concerns, including those relating to poverty, deforestation, desertification and, in particular, conflict, my Government believes that if we are to be successful in achieving the Millennium Development Goals, much will depend on increasing Africa's share of international trade, in parallel with an increase in official development assistance, the promotion of access to technology and the bridging of the digital divide.

As a conflict-affected country and a country with an economy in transition, Azerbaijan has limited finances to channel to NEPAD implementation. However, we stand ready to share our institutional and human potential for the benefit of NEPAD. I am proud to recall that for decades many young and ambitious men and women from African countries have received their higher education at our Oil Academy, as well as at other educational institutions, and today we know that many of them occupy important positions in their respective Governments and in the private sector throughout Africa, and that they contribute hugely to their national development.

Azerbaijan is ready to provide assistance for educating and training young representatives from African countries. We believe that the continuation of this partnership would be a good contribution to building African human capacity and ensure the sustainable and rational management of natural resources throughout the entire African continent.

Mr. Rock (Canada): I welcome the opportunity to take part in this timely and important discussion. We express our gratitude to the Secretary-General for the recent reports that form the backdrop to this debate (A/59/206 and 285).

Canada remains deeply committed to the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) because we believe that NEPAD matters to the future of Africa and that we all have a role to play in ensuring that it succeeds. We know that there is considerable debate within Africa and the donor community — debate that has been reflected in the statements made here today — as to whether or not NEPAD is, in fact, succeeding.

It is true that if we look at the impact that NEPAD has had on individual countries, much remains to be done. But viewed in terms of its broader impact on Africa, the results are already significant. It has provided an Africa-led policy framework around which

the United Nations, and the international community more generally, are organizing their support for Africa's development. It has reversed the decline in support for Africa on the part of development partners and has introduced peer review and mutual accountability as important elements of the decision-making process in Africa.

Canada and its Group of Eight (G-8) partners have worked very closely together, through our network of personal representatives for Africa and, more recently, within the context of the expanded Africa Partnership Forum, to ensure strong support for NEPAD. This includes ensuring effective follow-up to the commitments contained in the Africa Action Plan adopted at the G-8 Summit in Kananaskis, Canada, in 2002.

Canada has taken several additional steps in support of NEPAD since the debate last year. We have increased funds for international assistance by budgeting a further 8 per cent increase in 2005-2006, bringing the cumulative increase to 36 per cent over four years. Between January 2001 and September 2004, Canada provided $540 million in debt relief to African countries under the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries (HIPC) Debt Initiative. To date, Benin, Ethiopia, Ghana, Senegal and Tanzania have received full debt cancellation under that programme.

On 1 July 2004, Canada extended tariff-free access to the least developed countries for an additional 10 years, until June 2014. That will benefit all least developed countries, 34 of which are in Africa. We are continuing to implement a range of programmes under the 500-million Canadian dollar Canada Fund for Africa, also announced in Kananaskis, directly in support of NEPAD, with a focus on governance, peace and security, trade and economic growth, health, agriculture and water.

Canada was the first development partner to announce a contribution to the African Peer Review Process — a process that we believe is crucial in helping African countries to improve their governance.

The protection of civilians in armed conflict has long been a Canadian priority, so we are pleased to fund the African Union's Special Representative for the protection of civilians, and we are delighted with the recent appointment of Mrs. Mame Madior Boye to that important post.

In addition to those commitments, Canadians recognize the moral imperative of making medical treatment accessible to the millions who are suffering from deadly infectious diseases, notably HIV/AIDS, malaria and tuberculosis in Africa and elsewhere. With this in mind, in May 2004 Canada adopted the Jean Chrétien Pledge to Africa Act, becoming the first country to implement the landmark World Trade Organization decision of August 2003, which recognized the critical importance of low-cost pharmaceuticals to public health in developing countries to assist in the fight against infectious diseases, including HIV/AIDS, malaria, tuberculosis and other diseases. This new legislation allows for the export from Canada of safe and affordable generic drugs manufactured under compulsory licences. We expect the new legislation to come into force in early 2005, once the accompanying regulations have been put in place.

In May this year, Canada committed 100 million Canadian dollars to the World Health Organization's "3 by 5" initiative, which aims to facilitate access to antiretroviral therapy by 3 million HIV/AIDS patients in developing countries by 2005. That amount is over half of the current funding gap estimated by the World Health Organization (WHO) for 2004 and 2005.

In addition, Canada is a strong supporter of the Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria and has committed and disbursed $100 million over four years. Through that support, the Fund expects to enable the provision of 145 million combination drug treatments for malaria and the financing of over 108 million bed nets to protect families from the transmission of malaria. Last May, Canada announced an additional pledge of 70 million Canadian dollars to the Global Fund for 2005-2006, thereby doubling our annual contribution.

On the very subject under discussion today, in 2002 Canada also funded WHO for a five-year project costing 10 million Canadian dollars to support the Roll Back Malaria in Africa programme. That money is directed to the implementation of the regional strategy for promoting the role of traditional medicine in health-care systems.

(*spoke in French*)

NEPAD offers a framework and a vision for the attainment by Africa of its full potential. It enjoys unquestioned legitimacy because it was created by

Africans, for Africans, and reflects African priorities. It involves all sectors of society, while recognizing the much greater role that the private sector can play in African development.

Canada strongly supports the fulfilment of that potential. The Prime Minister, Paul Martin, recently co-chaired the United Nations Commission on the Private Sector and Development, the objectives of which dovetail with those of NEPAD. Our intention is to ensure that Canada's implementation of the report of that Commission and our support for NEPAD are mutually reinforcing.

We have already taken steps in that respect. One such initiative is the Canada Investment Fund for Africa, a joint public-private sector initiative that will provide at least $200 million in risk capital for private investments in Africa. We are pleased to report that we have selected a manager for the Fund, who will begin his work next year.

(*spoke in English*)

The Group of Eight (G-8) Africa Action Plan initiative in support of NEPAD remains a high priority for Canada. We strongly endorse continued G-8 engagement in support of NEPAD. To that end, we welcome and support fully the emphasis that Prime Minister Blair proposes to place on Africa at the G-8 Summit in 2005. We look forward to the conclusions of the Blair Commission for Africa and hope that the work of the Commission will reinforce the work already under way in NEPAD and the commitment contained in the Africa Action Plan adopted by G-8 leaders.

Above all, my concluding words are to reaffirm Canada's deep commitment to Africa and to working together with colleagues in this Hall from all over the world, working in common cause to see to it that the enormous potential of the continent of Africa is achieved — in health, in peace and for Africa, now and in the future.

Mr. Michelini (Italy): First of all, I wish to say that Italy aligns itself with the statement made by Ambassador van den Berg of the Netherlands on behalf of the European Union (EU). As a member of the EU and a major contributor to the European Commission's budget and policy, Italy fully endorses the views and positions expressed by the presidency of the European Union in its comprehensive statement.

Let me also thank the Secretary-General and his Special Adviser on Africa, Ambassador Gambari, for their reports on the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) and the causes of conflict in Africa, which have provided a most informative and stimulating input to our debate today.

This annual plenary debate in the General Assembly provides us with an important opportunity to reaffirm our solidarity and support for NEPAD. Italy is linked to Africa by deep and long-standing bonds. The African continent has been a constant priority of our bilateral and multilateral action, and a privileged partner of our civil society. Italy's feelings towards Africa are best expressed by the President of the Republic, Carlo Azeglio Ciampi, who has repeatedly affirmed that Italy pursues the same ends as the African countries: to bridge the divide between North and South; to achieve the Millennium Development Goals; and to enable Africa to participate fully in the life of the international community. This debate is also an opportunity to assess the progress achieved towards implementing NEPAD and to provide guidance on how to overcome existing difficulties, speed up the process and fill in the gaps.

In that respect, Italy agrees with the clear assessment provided by the Secretary-General in his two reports. African countries have made tremendous efforts to implement the NEPAD principles and policies. Important progress has been achieved, particularly in the areas of peace and security and regional integration, for which the African leaders and people can proudly take credit.

The international community must back up those efforts through consistent, sustained assistance. That is the second message conveyed by the Secretary-General's two reports, which, again, Italy shares and pledges to apply together with our EU partners, as the Dutch presidency has so effectively articulated. Allow me to outline some of Italy's main activities in support of Africa, and therefore in support of NEPAD.

In 2003 Italian official development assistance amounted to $2.4 billion dollars. More than 70 per cent of all our bilateral aid was directed to Africa. Italy finances 12.5 per cent of the European Development Fund, which is managed by the European Commission, and 5 per cent of the United Nations regular and peacekeeping budgets, the largest shares of whose activities are directed to African countries.

Italy has already cancelled almost $2 billion of the debt of African countries, and has led the international community by unilaterally cancelling 100 per cent of all pre- and post-cut-off-date aid loans and commercial credits. Once again, Italy invites all creditor countries to do the same by also cancelling 100 per cent of commercial credits. Italy is committed to cancelling an overall amount of approximately $4.5 billion within the Heavily Indebted Poor Countries Debt Initiative.

Several initiatives have been launched to promote a larger flow of private investments from Italy to Africa, increasing Italian entrepreneurs' awareness of the potential and opportunities represented by Africa. Access to global markets, trade and private investment are the engine that will drive African development.

Information and communication technology is another area in which Italy is engaged. We have established partnerships with a number of African countries, particularly in the sector of e-government.

As for the strengthening of African capacities in the areas of peacekeeping and peace-making, which was one of the objectives set by the Evian Summit of the Group of Eight (G-8), Italy has provided specialized training for a first group of 70 African officers and is now working with the United States on a much larger plan conceived at the G-8 Sea Island Summit: the Global Peace Operations Initiative, which is aimed at preparing 75,000 African troops for peacekeeping operations. Substantial financial contributions have also been made by Italy to the African Union mission in Burundi, the mission of the Economic Community of West African States in Côte d'Ivoire and the planning of an African Union mission to Somalia.

Finally, Italy contributes to peace in Africa through its active role in support of various mediation efforts. I would like to mention, in particular, the Naivasha talks for the Sudan — where the parties have granted observer status to Italy — and the Somalia National Reconciliation Conference. Let me take this opportunity to congratulate the Intergovernmental Authority on Development countries, Kenya and the other frontline States in particular, as well as all the Somalis who have contributed to the process, for the successful developments of the Conference and on the recent swearing-in of the new President of the Transitional Federal Republic of Somalia.

NEPAD is the road to African development, as Professor Wiseman Nkuhlu, tireless head of the NEPAD secretariat, is well aware. That is why in 2002 the General Assembly took the important decision to address all Africa-related issues within the NEPAD framework. That decision came after the G-8 had already adopted a strategic document, the Africa Action Plan, in response to NEPAD. I proudly ascribe this idea to the Genoa Summit of 2001, under the presidency of the Italian Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi. The G-8 Plan embodies the principles at the heart of our debate today: African ownership and partnership with the international community. Together with its G-8 partners, Italy is committed to implementing the Africa Action Plan, which provides the guidelines for our domestic and foreign policies in support of NEPAD.

Italy welcomes an active role for the United Nations in promoting and supporting NEPAD. The challenges ahead require integrated and coherent action that can be made more effective by the United Nations, which remains a unique instrument for responding to global issues. That is yet one more reason to strengthen the United Nations system and make multilateralism truly effective.

In conclusion, I wish to join other speakers in underlining that we must continue to look at Africa as a continent that shoulders its responsibilities and is capable of achieving renewed regional and global success, together with its partners of good will. Italy is convinced that the countries of Africa have the potential, resources — especially human resources — skills and will to overcome present difficulties and achieve the Millennium Development Goals within the set time frame. We must not allow pessimism to prevail, but must emphasize the positive instead. That is fundamental to the success of NEPAD and, ultimately, the success of Africa.

Mr. Chidumo (Mozambique): I am honoured to have the opportunity to participate in today's debate on issues of concern to the African continent. Africa has clearly embarked upon a new political culture, a political culture based on ownership, self-reliance and greater determination to overcome the obstacles to peace and stability, democracy, good governance, the rule of law and laying the foundations for long-term economic growth and sustainable development on the continent. That is the political culture that is actively pursued by the African Union and that is reflected in

its programmatic vision — the New Partnership for Africa's Development (NEPAD) — which is the focus of the high expectations not only of Africa but of the world at large.

The consolidation of peace, stability and security in Africa is paving the way for the implementation of NEPAD. Since its inception, the new political culture prevailing in the continent has made a significant contribution to making NEPAD a reality.

As indicated in the report of the Secretary-General (A/59/206) on the matter, much progress has been made in moving the Peer Review Mechanism forward. The number of countries that have signed to it has risen to 23, and Mechanism support missions have been dispatched to Ghana, Rwanda, Mauritius and Kenya, with my own country, Mozambique, being the next to be visited. The fact that African countries have agreed to share the costs of putting the Mechanism in place is to be commended, as it constitutes yet another indication of our seriousness about tackling the challenges of democratic governance, transparency and accountability, as well as ensuring uniformity and common standards.

Within the framework of the new political culture under NEPAD, the Southern African Development Community (SADC) adopted at its last summit, held in Mauritius, an electoral code of conduct aimed at providing a common electoral standard in the region, thereby ensuring more legitimacy for electoral processes in SADC countries. Furthermore, Africans have been meeting their well-known public commitment to advancing the implementation of NEPAD by earmarking financial resources for selected sectoral priorities. The implementation of NEPAD has also been advanced through the active involvement of regional organizations such as SADC, the Economic Community of West African States (ECOWAS) and others.

By allocating resources to development initiatives, African countries aim to jump-start economic growth on the continent, based on local ownership, responsibility and self-reliance, with a view to bringing about broad-based and sustainable development, as well as to attract foreign investment and assistance.

There is now high enthusiasm and great expectation that NEPAD, despite its infancy, will resolve at once all the problems faced by the continent. Caution must therefore be exercised, and the expectations about NEPAD's results must be realistic and commensurate with the resources available, the time required for implementation and the legacies our countries have inherited in the long journey towards political and economic emancipation. What is important is that NEPAD is a programmatic vision that will evolve — and it is rapidly evolving — across the continent at a varying pace and with varying impact.

In a relatively short period of time, the African continent has registered encouraging developments. However, many other challenges still persist, requiring international assistance to address them. The continent is severely affected by the impact of pandemic diseases such as HIV/AIDS, tuberculosis and malaria. For instance, in addition to death and retardation, malaria results in economic hardship, as families affected by the disease harvest less than half of what is harvested by healthy families. However, malaria is preventable, treatable and curable, as the Secretary-General rightly emphasizes in his report (A/59/261). The issue is, and has been, one of resources for Africa to combat that deadly disease. That is where the assistance of the international community is fundamental if we are to see meaningful progress in tackling those challenges.

In addition to funds pledged by African countries, the implementation of NEPAD requires robust financial engagement on the part of Africa's development partners. The international community must embrace NEPAD, in a partnership based on a win-win approach. In that partnership, Africa's development partners should provide resolute and comprehensive support to NEPAD as a whole, rather than selective and targeted focus in some areas — for instance on the Peer Review Mechanism, peacekeeping or governance. African problems are not simply limited to governance. Yes, governance is a problem, but Africa's challenges are much deeper and require a comprehensive approach to address them.

In particular, there is an urgent need to fund infrastructure development, which is critical to boosting economic activities and enhancing business competitiveness. International assistance should also target employment generation through support to labour intensive economic activities. Only through broad-based and sustained economic growth will we be able to reduce absolute poverty and contribute to the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.

Today, conflicts remain one of the major challenges faced by the world in general, and by Africa in particular. Within the new political culture I have

mentioned, Africans are making steady progress in conflict prevention, management and resolution. As stated in the Secretary-General's report (A/59/285), much has been achieved, with the number of conflicts prevailing in the continent reduced significantly. We see about six today, as compared to 19 in 1999. That progress was made possible by the collective efforts of Africans, assisted by the international community, in addressing not only the conflicts themselves but their root causes as well.

Within the framework of those collective efforts, last May the African Union established its Peace and Security Council, which is charged with the responsibility of overseeing the maintenance of peace, stability and security on the continent. The first task of the newly established Council was to immediately take up the situation in Darfur. Under the able leadership of President Obasanjo, in his capacity as current Chairperson of the African Union, the Council engaged the parties concerned in talks that culminated with a ceasefire and the deployment of an African Union Mission to monitor the implementation of the parties' commitments on the ground.

The African Union, through its regional organizations — such as SADC, ECOWAS and the Intergovernmental Authority on Development — has been playing an effective and successful role in the maintenance of peace, stability and security in the region. We congratulate ourselves for the outstanding outcome in the peace process in Somalia, which culminated in the recent constitution of the Parliament and last Friday's inauguration, in Nairobi, of the President of the Transitional Government. We are also encouraged about the positive developments being registered in Burundi, Sierra Leone, Liberia, Côte d'Ivoire and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

In the Great Lakes region, following the massacre in Gatumba, African countries played a key role in easing the tension between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its neighbours by establishing confidence-building measures. Those efforts culminated in the activation of a joint verification mechanism between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and Rwanda, which is an initiative aimed at facilitating an active political engagement between the two countries.

The recent establishment by the Secretary-General of a regional support group composed of a number of African heads of State or Government to help resolve all outstanding political issues and improve the relationship between the Democratic Republic of the Congo and its neighbours is an important step ahead that we commend. We believe that that decision will certainly strengthen the joint verification mechanism, while ensuring strong political involvement on the part of African leaders in the search for solutions to the conflict in the Great Lakes region.

We look forward to the holding of the international conference on the Great Lakes region, to be held at Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, on 19 and 20 November 2004. The outcome of the discussions of the main themes on the agenda for the summit — peace and security, democracy and good governance, economic development and humanitarian and social issues — will not only contribute to strengthening the peace process and to political harmony in the region, but also to peace, stability, security and regional economic cooperation in the region.

However, that progress is being overshadowed by the recent events in Guinea-Bissau. What we are witnessing in that country underscores the fact that countries emerging from conflict need continued attention and assistance from the international community, so as to succeed in the painful transition to post-conflict peace-building. The international community must act decisively to ensure the consolidation of the political process and to generate economic activity and steady recovery, as the absence of those elements has exposed the weaknesses of the peace process, which results in a culture of violence and murder.

I wish to conclude by referring to what President Joaquim Chissano stated during the general debate: "Today we are building self-confidence around Africa and creating the necessary conditions for sustainable development" (*A/59/PV.4, p. 6*): principally, peace, stability and good political, economic and corporate governance.

Indeed, the African Union and NEPAD are the tools to which Africans have resorted in order to address the challenges faced by the continent in moving towards an African renaissance. Africans have taken over their destiny and are devising their own strategy for self-advancement. We encourage the international community to embrace that resolve and support the efforts of the African continent in realizing its goal of an African renaissance, economic growth and sustainable development.

The meeting rose at 6.20 p.m.